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ABSTRACT

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Faculty Development Practices in Taiwan Higher Education

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The universities in Taiwan in carrying out their missions of research, teaching and public service have made significant advances in improving the quality of their faculties. Both public and private universities have undertaken a variety of faculty development activities to help their faculties grow professionally and to remain vital. The major activities, often based on western models, have emphasized research needs, and in format are most often sabbatical leaves and grants to support either research or advanced graduate study. The universities efforts in faculty development, with the support and encouragement of the Ministry of Education and the National Science Council, have helped the higher education system not only to improve educational services, but also to help better the nation's economic position and the quality of life for the Chinese people.

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Faculty Development Practices in Taiwan Higher Education

Will the Republic of China be able to provide higher education of sufficient quality over the next several decades so that the nation may continue its growth and enhance its economic well-being? The answer, in large part, will depend on how successful Taiwan is in improving the development and renewal of faculty who serve the higher education system. The main duty of every college and university is to assemble a competent faculty and to create a scholarly environment where the business of higher education can be carried forward. This easily recognized but not so easily achieved goal is one to which Taiwan is committed. Its public and

private universities in developing their missions recognize the necessity of a strong professoriate, and are undertaking efforts to improve the quality of their faculty. Chinese academic leaders increasingly recognize that university faculty are a resource which must be nurtured, and are attempting to find ways to improve the quality and productivity of faculty.

My interest in faculty development in Taiwan higher education stems from my own work as an academic vice president in an American college. One of the greatest challenges that any chief academic officer faces is that of promoting the professional growth of faculty. Scarce resources and other competing needs combine to make achievement of a successful faculty development program an elusive goal. Faculties in American colleges are aging and are less mobile than they were two decades ago. "Burn out" and departure from the academy by faculty have become very real problems for colleges and universities in providing education of high quality. As a result, those charged with administering higher education institutions in the United States more and more have found it wise to concentrate greater energies on faculty renewal.

Taiwan universities, too, face a challenge in implementing successful faculty development programs, but for somewhat different reasons than their American

counterparts. The Taiwanese efforts, often based on western models, are more recent and are still evolving. But the efforts are energetic, and instructive to the American observer. It was a revealing experience for me to have the opportunity to study faculty development practices in Taiwan higher education.

With the help of the Pacific Cultural Foundation, I was able to formulate a project which would enable me to meet with academic leaders in Taiwan and to learn from them the extent to which faculty development is an issue and how they go about handling any faculty development concerns. This article is based on interviews I conducted with academic administrators and faculty from representative public and private universities, and with officials from the Ministry of Education and the National Science Council, agencies which have an enormous stake in the functioning of higher education.

One of the most striking aspects of higher education in Taiwan is the national commitment to academic excellence. This commitment is evident at all levels--from government agencies responsible for higher education to administrators, faculty and students. Considering the fact that most of the nation's universities are relatively new and are without long standing tradition or substantive endowment, Taiwan's universities have made remarkable advances in delivering

an effective higher education system. Through their daytime and evening divisions they are able to serve an increasing number of people without the loss of the basic commitment to maintaining high academic standards.

The Chinese people have always had a strong faith in education, and many have seen education as a curative for the most pressing of the nation's problems. Though higher education has never been or can be a panacea for the society's ills, it has fostered significant growth and improvement for the Chinese people in the nearly forty years since the Nationalist government has been located in Taiwan. The universities in Taiwan reflect the popular belief in the value of education, and in developing their missions have established ambitious goals in meeting societal needs.

Both public and private universities have a sense of shared mission. They serve as part of a nationwide delivery system in providing part of a comprehensive educational program to the Chinese people. Though each institution has sufficient latitude to determine how it will develop its mission, it is an integral part of a national system of education and it functions in that capacity. The Ministry of Education in the central government has the responsibility of dealing with all administrative matters relating to academic work and education. It provides guidance to the national

universities on basic policy matters, and to a lesser, but yet significant degree, gives direction to the private universities. This centralized approach to higher education has generally worked well, and has helped establish common bases for action. Over the years the Ministry of Education has placed an increased emphasis on educational planning. A planned educational system is regarded as essential if Taiwan is to make the best use of available economic resources. University administrators recognize the importance of careful planning, and by and large, work harmoniously and cooperatively with the Ministry of Education in the delivery of educational services.

One of the recognized needs in higher education in Taiwan is that of achieving a critical mass of faculty. In the years shortly after the move of the national government to Taiwan, there were serious shortages of qualified faculty in the new and reconstituted universities. This problem was compounded in the 1960s and 1970s by the loss of many newly educated and able professors who left Taiwan for more financially attractive positions outside the country, mostly in the United States or in Europe. But these problems have gradually diminished. As Taiwan has improved its economic position worldwide, the stature of its higher education system has risen. In fact, university

faculties have never been more stable than they are at present. Most universities are having more success than they have had before in attracting and retaining highly qualified faculty. There is still room for considerable improvement, but Taiwan's universities are approaching the point where the possibility of achieving a critical mass of faculty is a realistic goal.

Throughout the higher education system there is an awareness that more needs to be done in improving the quality of faculty. The Ministry of Education is taking steps to assist in faculty development, and university administrators are beginning to see the desirability of more comprehensive faculty development efforts. In defining what is meant by faculty development, I am in this study using the term in a broad sense to apply to any activities utilized by a university in assisting its faculty, old and new, in improving their performance as teachers, scholars and researchers. This definition assumes, as William Nelsen so ably does in his book, Renewal of the Teacher-Scholar, that faculty development includes both "growth" and "revitalizing" functions.¹

Universities in Taiwan currently utilize a variety of faculty development practices. These practices are largely traditional and tend to follow models that are long standing in American and European higher educational institutions. There is also a great deal of

uniformity among the universities in the application of faculty development. The kinds of development activities are essentially the same in each university, with sabbaticals and leaves of absence to undertake advanced graduate study receiving the greatest emphasis. And to date most activities are piecemeal. What is done tends to work and appears to be effective, but there are no comprehensive faculty development programs. During the last two decades the Ministry of Education has concentrated its efforts in building a critical mass of faculty for the nation's universities. With that goal of a solid, basic core of competent faculty for the universities nearing reality, the higher education system is now in a position where for the first time more attention can be given to the broader possibilities of faculty development.

Advanced study

Of all faculty development activities in Taiwan universities the one receiving the greatest emphasis is advanced study. In building their faculties, universities have understandably looked at advanced graduate study as an essential element in achieving quality. The higher education community has made steady progress in employing faculty with terminal degrees and in encouraging faculty without such degrees to complete

additional study and obtain the doctorate. By the 1985-86 academic year 75% of all professors and associate professors in the nine national universities held the doctorate, and 49% of professors and associate professors from the seven private universities held the terminal degree.² Contributing to the success universities have had in assembling faculties holding the Ph.D. are several programs which have made possible advanced study.

Among these programs is the Advanced Study Grant administered by the Ministry of Education. This grant is available for faculty from the eight especially promoted fields of sciences and technology, and enables recipients to pursue doctoral degrees. The grant extends for three years and includes monthly living expenses for studying abroad or in Taiwan (U.S. \$800-900 abroad and NT \$8,000 in Taiwan). The award also covers tuition fees, travel reimbursements, insurance, and related academic expenses. From 1983 to 1986, 114 persons received the Advanced Study Grant. Of these, 95 went to those studying abroad and 19 went for study in Taiwan.³

An additional program of the Ministry of Education is the Overseas Study Grant. Each year through a highly competitive examination a number of university faculty are provided grants which assist them in conducting post

doctoral research or advanced study. The grant is for a one to four year period and covers all basic academic expenses.

The agency most vitally involved in funding higher education research, the National Science Council (NSC) also has an Overseas Advanced Study Grant. Under this program the NSC provides funds for degree study for two to three years and for non-degree retraining projects for up to two years. These grants cover all basic academic expenses.

Another national program that faculty have been able to use for advanced study is the Advanced Study Program for Civil Servants and Teachers sponsored by the Executive Yuan. Projects in this program may extend from six months to three years. Each year under this program many university professors receive grants to enable them to study abroad or in Taiwan.

The various national programs designed to encourage advanced study indicate the level of commitment to such efforts from the higher education system. Universities also encourage their faculty to seek funds from other resources to enable them to either obtain the doctorate or to complete post doctoral study. Through an exacting promotions policy the universities also encourage additional study. The holding of the doctoral degree is increasingly becoming an essential condition if a

faculty member is eventually to achieve the rank of full professor.

Sabbatical leaves

If a faculty member is to leave the campus for an extended period of study, the standard format is the sabbatical leave. University administrators when questioned about faculty development practices usually will first mention the sabbatical. The award of a sabbatical leave is a high honor for a faculty member, and a mark of achievement for the institution. Little wonder the sabbatical is given such prominent attention. The traditional sabbatical leave is supported by the government and carries with it full salary for the recipient. Those who are eligible for this sabbatical must hold the rank of professor and have served the university for seven years at that rank. An eligible faculty member must apply for the grant and prepare a proposal for study which initially has the approval of his department. Once approval is given at the various levels, the award is established for one year at full salary. In addition to the government-supported sabbatical, other funding sources may also be used to support the leave. In order to facilitate the successful implementation of a sabbatical leave, the professor often has the responsibility of assisting his

academic department in finding a replacement and/or ways of covering his responsibilities during the period of absence. Sabbatical leaves in Taiwan, as in other countries are costly, but a highly valuable means of faculty development. The public universities in Taiwan, due in large part to the greater assistance they receive from the central government, have been more successful than the private universities in the number of sabbaticals they award.

Research grants

The research grant is another form of valuable aid to university professors. Research grants may come from a variety of public and private sources, but the agency that has had the most influence in providing funds for university research is the National Science Council. The NSC is the major funding institute for academic research in the Republic of China. Since 1980 the NSC has increased its budget at an annual rate of more than 18%. In 1986 its budget was the equivalent of U.S. \$57 million, an increase of 38% over the previous year. Approximately one-half the annual budget goes to support research growth. All funds designated for universities are granted on a project basis, and a peer review system is used to determine funding priority. The number of research grants awarded has increased each year, and in

1985, 1750 grants were approved, more than double the amount in 1982. For 1985, researchers in the life sciences received 42% of grant expenditures, followed by those in the fields of engineering and natural sciences and mathematics. A smaller amount, about 13% of the total expenditures were in planning and evaluation, humanities and social sciences, and science education.

The extensive efforts of the National Science Council indicate the strong commitment of the Republic of China to furthering research in the sciences and technology. The NSC actively solicits research proposals, and is currently emphasizing team research which can help the nation in its rapid scientific and technological growth.⁴

Visiting scholars/faculty exchanges

One way that Taiwan universities help maintain intellectual vibrancy on their campuses is through a visiting scholars program. By bringing prominent scholars to campus, either for lectures or offering of courses, a university is able to broaden its dimensions of academic service. The National Science Council assists in this effort by providing funding through three separate programs whereby a university may bring in outside scholars. Most of the universities use the visiting scholar format to at least some degree, though

the public universities make the greater utilization of visiting scholars who are in residence for extended periods.

An activity closely related to the visiting scholar programs is the faculty exchange. A number of public universities with the support of the Ministry of Education conduct faculty exchanges. These exchanges are usually for a period of one year and are normally conducted with institutions outside Taiwan. Some of the universities have developed on-going exchange relationships and have identified "sister institutions" with which exchanges are routinely conducted. Private universities also have made substantial use of exchange programs, and recognize the exchanges as important aspects of their faculty development activities.

Curriculum/Instructional development

In recent years American universities have given considerable attention to curriculum and instruction as part of faculty development activities. Curriculum and instructional development also receive attention in Taiwan universities, but less so as an aspect of faculty development. To a large extent improvements in curriculum and instruction are regarded as the purview of the faculty member. Each faculty member is expected to give attention to curriculum change and instructional

improvement as part of his responsibility as a teacher. This is not to say, however, that these areas are ignored by the universities. Departments in each institution routinely undertake curriculum changes as they are needed. The Ministry of Education also assists in these efforts. The Ministry currently provides funds for universities, colleges and academic associations to hold curriculum development symposia.

The Ministry of Education also has a program encouraging faculty to enhance the quality of instructional materials. Faculty may apply for awards of from NT \$5,000 to \$50,000 as part of the Instructional Material Development Award program. Efforts in instructional improvement are, however, usually less formal. The question of instruction is most often addressed at the department level. Faculty in a department, through discussion and informal meetings attempt to promote instructional improvement. One university president stated that since his institution had a large percentage of young faculty that he had initiated a number of informal meetings and conferences to assist younger instructors in improving their teaching. One private university in 1986 held a workshop on the topic of effective teaching as a required exercise for faculty who had taught for less than five years. Organized activities to better the

quality of instruction have, however, been sporadic. Private institutions have often taken the lead in initiating the more successful efforts.

Faculty travel

Funding to support faculty travel is most often associated with research growth and sabbatical leaves. The National Science Council by its support of numerous research activities has made possible faculty travel. It also has a Faculty Travel Grant program which provides money to defray expenses for faculty who attend international academic conferences. The Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Relations, an agency within the Ministry of Education, provides aid for certain professors and associate professors attending international conferences. Academic departments within the universities encourage faculty to seek external support from appropriate sources so that they may attend conferences related to their professional fields. Most of the academic conferences within Taiwan are organized so that expenses involved in attending are minimal. The conferences are ordinarily one day in length, and the host institution provides lunch. Since the travel distance is usually not very long, faculty who participate do not incur any large expense.

Outstanding faculty awards

Awards for outstanding faculty are also part of faculty development. The Ministry of Education presents a prestigious award for outstanding research each year in nine fields: study of the Three Principles of the People, education, liberal arts, law, science, engineering, agriculture, business, and medical science. Winners in each field receive NT \$200,000. The Ministry also provides awards for instructional excellence. Each year universities select 200 faculty members who have demonstrated the highest instructional quality. These honorees receive NT \$120,000.

Summary

Taiwan's universities in formulating their mission have committed themselves to the furtherance of research, teaching and public service. Of these missions the one which has received the greatest emphasis is research. This is understandable considering Taiwan's history and its potential for growth. Though Taiwan is small, geographically, it has a labor force with enormous potential. By promoting economic and technological growth, the Republic of China is gradually improving its economic position. Not only is Taiwan becoming a producer of high tech goods and

services, but it now has the potential of developing as a significant market for a variety of foreign products. The central government has seen that strategic economic planning is essential to the nation's economic growth. Both public and private universities in Taiwan have a role in Taiwan's move forward. The universities, with the encouragement of the Ministry of Education and the National Science Council, have embarked on a number of research projects designed to augment economic development. Faculty development activities in the universities reflect this interest. Most activities in one way or another are geared toward promoting academic research. In the awarding of sabbatical leaves and research or advanced study grants the primary concern is with the extent they will provide needed research. Though universities view the teaching mission as important, they have not given it the same emphasis as they have research.

Taiwan has made considerable advances since 1949 in modernizing its educational system. It has made use of various Western, and especially American models of educational practice, including those related to faculty development. But as one prominent Chinese scholar has observed, the key to Taiwan's success is that of adapting rather than adopting educational philosophies and practice that are particularly suited to its

educational system.⁵ This certainly holds true for faculty development. As the nation is growing and expanding its economic potential the need for basic scientific and technological research has been clearly dominant.

As the nation's economic position improves and its higher educational system continues to modernize and respond to the needs of the people, it is likely that universities will be able to implement more comprehensive programs of faculty development. Such programs would continue the emphasis on basic research, but could also give more attention to improving instruction. Expanded commitments to faculty development activities will not be easy for universities that must make the most budget-conscious utilization of monies available to them. But given the fact that Taiwan universities have made considerable progress in improving the overall quality of their faculties and that they have demonstrated dynamic energies for improved educational services, the prospects for professional development of faculty in the future are bright indeed.

NOTES

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¹William C. Nelsen, Renewal of the Teacher Scholar Faculty Development in the Liberal Arts College (Association of American Colleges 1981), pp. 12-15.

²Educational Statistics of the Republic of China (Ministry of Education 1986), p. 98.

³Interview with J. M. Chen, Director of Technological and Vocational Education, Ministry of Education. Director Chen was extremely helpful in providing data on efforts of the Ministry in assisting faculty in the universities.

⁴National Science Council (National Science Council 1986), pp. 4-6.

⁵For an excellent discussion of modernization in Chinese education see Ping-huang Huang, "Research Notes on Modernization of Education in the Republic of China Since 1949," Issues and Studies: A Journal of Chinese Studies and International Affairs, Vol. 21, No. 9 (September 1985).